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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 KUWAIT 000873

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STATE FOR PM, NEA, S/CT, DS/ATA
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ENERGY FOR KOLEVAR

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SUBJECT: U.S.-KUWAIT GULF SECURITY DIALOGUE TALKS (MAY 22, 2007)

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: Discussion on Iran and Iraq dominated the May 22 U.S.-Kuwait Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD). Both countries agreed on the threat from Iran, but GOK officials expressed concern about Kuwait's vulnerability to Iranian retaliation (conventional and asymmetric) and the perceived ambiguity of the U.S. strategy to deal with Iran. On Iraq, Kuwait is committed to supporting Al-Maliki for now, but fears he is losing support. The Kuwaiti government (GOK) is also concerned that Al-Qaeda in Iraq could turn its focus on Kuwait, particularly if the Baghdad Security Plan succeeds. On energy infrastructure security, the two sides agreed to establish a joint working group to address vulnerabilities and welcomed the visit of a U.S. team to focus on maritime threat reduction. The GOK is willing to participate in future PSI exercises. Kuwait believes the GSD discussions are a very useful tool to increase U.S. communication on our Gulf policy and strategy. End summary.

¶2. (S/NF) On May 22, Kuwait hosted the second round of the U.S.-Kuwait Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD) discussions. Kuwait National Security Bureau (NSB) President Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd Al-Sabah chaired the meeting; Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Stephen Mull and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Mark Kimmitt led the U.S. delegation. Both sides reiterated their strong support for and commitment to a long-term U.S.-Kuwait strategic relationship. The two sides agreed to meet every six months for GSD discussions, alternating capitals, and to address any interim issues through their embassies. A joint statement was issued and received favorable local press coverage (see para 17).

Regional Security

¶3. (S/NF) The USG regional security discussion focused on Iran, Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts, and Lebanon, and included a request for assistance to Yemen and Afghanistan. NEA DAS Gordon Gray emphasized the U.S. commitment to the diplomatic track on Iran, a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the establishment of an international tribunal on Lebanon, and cooperation/discussion with regional allies through the GSD, GCC 2, and UN. Shaykh Ahmed said Kuwait "shares the same goals on all these issues," and stressed the importance of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Kuwait pledged continued support for Lebanese PM Siniora's government and the international tribunal. Shaykh Ahmed asked for U.S. help in resolving tensions between Libya and Saudi Arabia due to both

sides' suspicions that the other is supporting rebel groups in neighboring countries: Saudi Arabia in Chad, and Libya in Yemen. Shaykh Ahmed also expressed concern that Al-Qaeda was expanding operations in North Africa and Somalia, and stressed the importance of finding a solution in Darfur. AA/S Mull urged Kuwait to support the deployment of a UN/African Union peacekeeping force.

Iran

¶4. (S/NF) DIA Senior Defense Intelligence Officer for the Middle East Bruce Hardcastle provided a detailed brief of the U.S. assessment of the current state of the Iranian nuclear program and Iranian intentions. Kuwait shares our assessment of and opposition to Iran's nuclear program. Shaykh Ahmed pledged Kuwait's continued support for any additional UN Security Council Resolutions on Iran, but outlined several concerns: the perceived lack of a clear U.S. strategy on Iran; Kuwait's vulnerability to Iranian missiles; differences within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) over the level of public opposition to Iran's nuclear program; the lack of solid intelligence about the program; and the threat of Iranian retaliation against Kuwait if attacked by the U.S. or Israel. Kuwait expressed difficulty interpreting and supporting what it sees as an inconsistent USG policy towards Iran.

¶5. (S/NF) Shaykh Ahmed said cooperation within the GCC was improving. He confirmed that plans are afoot within the GCC for a joint meeting of foreign ministers, defense ministers, and national security advisers to discuss security concerns. (Over lunch, he told the Ambassador that GCC national security advisors were to meet before the joint session but

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that dates had not yet been set for either GCC meeting.) He asked the U.S. to apply more pressure on GCC countries to cooperate among themselves. He also noted GCC countries' recent discussions with NATO on developing a capability to deal with consequences of a nuclear incident, for which they "may need U.S. help in developing." (Note: Shaykh Ahmed and Shaykh Thamer told Ambassador recently that they are satisfied at this time with the level of cooperation with NATO.)

¶6. (S/NF) NSB Deputy Director Shaykh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah argued that Kuwait had "no way" to protect itself against Iranian missiles, particularly Silkworms, or rockets similar to those used by Hizballah against Israel last summer. Since no missile defense system is capable of addressing this vulnerability, he stressed that there must be a political, not a military, solution to the Iranian threat. Shaykh Thamer said the widespread perception among many Kuwaitis that a U.S. attack on Iran was imminent was creating "mayhem." Commander of the Kuwaiti Air Force General Yousef Al-Otaibi echoed these concerns and asked what precautions could be taken to prevent GCC countries from being "caught in the crossfire." Shaykh Ahmed said the GOK did not anticipate a conflict this year, but believed that Iran would respond to any attack by retaliating against Kuwait: firing missiles at Kuwait if attacked by the U.S., or sponsoring terrorist attacks in Kuwait if attacked by Israel. He noted that Iran had increased its intelligence activities in Kuwait in preparation. AA/S Mull, DASD Kimmitt, and DAS Gray stressed that the U.S. was not seeking a military confrontation with Iran and was advising Israel to let diplomatic efforts take their course. Shaykh Ahmed reiterated Kuwait's support for the U.S. and opposition to Iran's nuclear program, but urged the U.S. to understand Kuwaiti (and Gulf) sensitivities to aggressively confronting its much larger neighbor.

¶7. (S/NF) AA/S Mull concluded the regional security session by emphasizing the U.S.'s clear opposition to the emergence of a nuclear-armed Iran and by outlining the USG's seven-fold strategy in preventing this from happening by: 1) pursuing

multilateral action through the UN; 2) restricting Iran's access to international financing; 3) maintaining a strong, visible military presence in the region; 4) coordinating carefully with GCC allies; 5) reaching out to the Iranian people; 6) pressuring Iran regionally; and 7) trying to convince Iran to play a more constructive role in Iraq. AA/S Mull said the U.S.-Iran meeting in Baghdad on May 28 would focus solely on Iraqi security and would not address Iran's nuclear program. Shaykh Ahmed noted Kuwait's support for such U.S. talks with Iran.

Iraq

¶ 8. (S/NF) DASD Kimmitt and USCENTCOM Director of Strategy, Plans, and Policy Maj Gen Vern Findley outlined progress in implementing the Baghdad Security Plan and emphasized that its main objective was to buy time for political reconciliation. They said it was still too soon to tell if the plan was succeeding and noted that there would be a major strategic review in September. Shaykh Ahmed said Kuwait would continue to support Iraqi PM Nouri Al-Maliki and urge other Gulf countries to do the same, but noted that he was losing support within Iraq and among GCC states. DASD Kimmitt argued that the U.S. military leadership was capable and flexible enough to adjust the plan to cope with changes. Shaykh Ahmed expressed concern that, if the plan succeeded, Al-Qaeda in Iraq could begin targeting Kuwait. He also stressed the need for more communication and cooperation on Iraq, and asked the USG to pressure the GOI to do more to stop smuggling/militia activity along the Kuwait-Iraq border, noting that these incidents undermined domestic support for assistance to Iraq.

Critical Energy Infrastructure Protection

¶ 9. (S/NF) AA/S Mull proposed that the USG and GOK establish a Joint Working Group for Critical Energy Infrastructure Protection (CEIP) as a mechanism to enhance Kuwait's energy infrastructure security through a formalized exchange of expertise and intelligence. Shaykh Ahmed accepted the proposal and suggested it be formalized after the follow-up visit by a USG CEIP team tentatively scheduled for June 12-13. Referring to energy infrastructure as "the number one

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target for Kuwait's enemies," Shaykh Ahmed said he looked forward to more bilateral cooperation on CEIP. He indicated that the GOK Security Decision Follow-up Committee (SDFC) would coordinate Kuwaiti CEIP efforts.

¶ 10. (S/NF) Hussain Ismail, Deputy Managing Director of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) delivered a short presentation on CEIP, saying that significant activity was already underway to implement many of the recommendations made by the USG teams. Ismail said the Kuwaitis were already aware of most, but not all of the vulnerabilities identified by the USG teams. He said KNPC, the Kuwait Coast Guard, and the SDFC, which was represented at the GSD by Colonel Mohammed Al-Faresi, were working together to develop a "structured, time-bound plan" to implement most of the USG security recommendations. He added that "80 per cent of the necessary hardware upgrades are either complete or in progress." Kuwait expressed strong support for the USG teams' recommendation to establish a GOK Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) to integrate Kuwait's CEIP regime.

Enhanced Defensive Capabilities and Cooperation

¶ 11. (S/NF) Gen. Al-Otaibi expressed appreciation for U.S. support in enhancing Kuwait's defensive capabilities and asked the USG to consider 1) stockpiling more Patriot missiles in Kuwait for both U.S. and Kuwaiti use should the need arise, and 2) providing back-up Patriot radar systems

while Kuwait upgrades its own systems over the next four years. Shaykh Ahmed noted that Kuwait's security focus had shifted from its northern border to its coastline. AA/S Mull reaffirmed the USG's commitment to providing additional defensive systems/weapony to Kuwait, including PAC III, unarmed UAV platforms, F/A-18 upgrades, 3-D radar systems, and advanced communications systems. He said the USG should be able to move ahead without difficulty. Maj Gen Findley said CENTCOM technical experts were available to help Kuwait develop and integrate its air defense strategy.

¶12. (C/NF) AA/S Mull asked Kuwait to reconsider participating in the upcoming conference in Lima to discuss a Norwegian-sponsored treaty banning cluster munitions. Shaykh Ahmed noted the USG's concerns and promised to convey them to the Foreign Minister.

Counterproliferation

¶13. (S/NF) Shaykh Thamer affirmed Kuwait's desire to participate in future Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) exercises. He noted, however, that it would be easier for the GOK if it were a UN, rather than a U.S., initiative. Shaykh Thamer echoed this sentiment regarding the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, which he suggested could be introduced in the UN as part of a third UNSCR on Iran. AA/S Mull expressed disappointment that Kuwait withdrew from last October's PSI exercise in Bahrain, but welcomed Kuwait's commitment to participate in future exercises.

¶14. (S/NF) Al-Awadi reported that Kuwait had formed a committee headed by the Foreign Minister to ensure implementation of UNSCRs 1737 and 1747. He said Kuwait had been complying so far and would continue to do so. Shaykh Ahmed agreed, adding that "Kuwait will respect and act on all UNSCRs related to Iran." AA/S Mull emphasized that the UNSCRs would only succeed if everyone cooperated in enforcing them.

Counterterrorism and Internal Security

¶15. (S/NF) While praising the overall intelligence relationship, Shaykh Ahmed stressed the need for increased cooperation and communication on intelligence issues. In particular, he emphasized the need for enhanced technology. Shaykh Ahmed said Kuwait was struggling to keep track of the threats from both Al-Qaeda and Iran and complained that Kuwait only got "one quarter of the information" from the U.S. The GOK believes the main targets in the country are: 1) energy facilities, 2) expatriates and civilian areas, and 3) the country's leadership. AA/S Mull agreed on the importance of intelligence sharing and urged the GOK to pursue any issues about the liaison relationship through

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liaison channels or through the Ambassador.

¶16. (S/NF) On countering money laundering and terror financing, Shaykh Thamer argued that laws adopted over the last year had proven effective in limiting transfers of large funds to illicit/terrorist organizations. He claimed known Kuwaiti terror financiers, such as Mubarak Al-Bathali, were now only able to raise and transfer small amounts of money.

U.S.-Kuwait Gulf Security Dialogue Joint Statement

¶17. (U) Begin text of joint statement:

Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs Stephen D. Mull and His Excellency Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the President of Kuwait's National Security Bureau, today co-chaired the second meeting

of the United States-Kuwait Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD). The inaugural meeting of the GSD was held in September 2006 in Washington, DC, with follow on meetings occurring approximately every six months and alternating between Kuwait and the United States. The second round of talks are a reflection of the U.S. and Kuwait's commitment to regional security and cooperation on shared security matters that affect the Gulf region, including the situations in Iraq and Lebanon, terrorism, proliferation, and infrastructure security.

The key objectives of the GSD are to convey U.S. commitment to a long-term presence in the Gulf for the peace and security of our GCC allies, as well to encourage regional partners to take the steps necessary to enhance their capabilities to deter or defend against shared threats.

The GSD addresses conventional as well as non-conventional, asymmetric, and terrorist threats to Gulf security. To counter these threats, the U.S.-Kuwait discussions focus on six key "pillars":

- (1) Enhanced defensive capabilities and cooperation;
- (2) Regional security;
- (3) Critical infrastructure protection;
- (4) Counterterrorism and internal security;
- (5) Counterproliferation; and
- (6) Developing a shared assessment on Iraq.

During today's meetings, Ambassador Mull and Shaykh Al-Sabah affirmed their countries' commitment to the long-standing U.S.-Kuwait strategic relationship and agreed to continue their cooperation in promoting regional peace and security.

Both acknowledged a shared goal of a unified, democratic, and stable Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors and itself. They pledged to continue to support the legitimately elected government of Iraq.

With regard to Iran's nuclear activities, both sides reiterated their strong desire for a diplomatic solution and noted that such a solution can be reached by implementing the requirements outlined in UNSCR 1737 and 1747.

The U.S. and Kuwait agreed to continue their robust cooperation on counterproliferation and on addressing vulnerabilities to Kuwait's energy infrastructure. Kuwait agreed to consider participating in future Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) exercises and activities.

Ambassador Mull and Shaykh Al-Sabah expressed their satisfaction with the second round of the GSD, and both look forward to continuing this important dialogue between the two countries. The next meeting of the GSD will take place in Washington, DC in the fall of this year.

End text.

Participants

118. (SBU)

United States:

- Ambassador Richard LeBaron, U.S. Embassy, Kuwait
- Stephen Mull, Department of State, Acting Assistant

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Secretary, Bureau of Political Military Affairs

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- Mark T. Kimmitt, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Middle East)
- Gordon Gray, Department of State, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs

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- Maj Gen Vern Findley, CENTCOM
- BGen Charles L. Hudson, Office of Military Cooperation, U.S. Embassy, Kuwait
- Bruce Hardcastle, Defense Intelligence Agency
- Nikhil Ramchand, National Security Council Staff
- Lt Col Reginald O. Robinson, USAF, Department Of State, Bureau of Political Military Affairs
- LCol Bernard Dodson Jr., CENTCOM
- LTC Robert Friedenberg, Defense Attaché, U.S. Embassy, Kuwait
- Jonathan Turley, Political Officer, U.S. Embassy, Kuwait (notetaker)
- Steve Conlon, Economic Officer, U.S. Embassy, Kuwait (notetaker)

Kuwait:

- Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd Al-Sabah, President, National Security Bureau
- Shaykh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Director, National Security Bureau
- Ambassador Mansour Al-Awadi, Director, International Organizations Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Major General Yousef Duwaiyan Faris Al-Otaibi, Kuwait Air Force Commander
- Major General Ibrahim Al-Wasmi, Land Forces Commander
- Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Rasheed, Ministry of Interior
- Brigadier General Faisal Al-Tabtabaei, Ministry of Interior
- Colonel Mohammed Al-Faresi, Deputy Director, Security Decision Follow-up Committee
- Hussain Ismail, Deputy Managing Director, Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), Ministry of Oil
- Colonel Abdullah Al-Kandari, Director of Counterterrorism, Kuwait State Security, Ministry of Interior
- Shaykh Fawaz Al-Mishal Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, National Security Bureau
- Fawaz Al-Sammar, National Security Bureau
- Shaykh Sabah Shamlan Al-Sabah, National Security Bureau
- Shaykh Khaled Ahmed Al-Sabah, National Security Bureau
- Abdulaziz Al-Salem, National Security Bureau
- Mubarak Al-Hajraf, National Security Bureau
- Ghanim Al-Otaibi, National Security Bureau
- Abdul Mutaleb Ahmed, National Security Bureau
- Mohsen Al-Mutairi, National Security Bureau
- Khalid Al-Khulifa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

¶19. (U) This cable was cleared by the GSD delegation.

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LeBaron